

**Remarks by the Acting Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity, David Cooper, at the fifty-first session of
the Committee on World Food Security**

**Panel discussion on interlinkages between food security and the Rio
conventions**

Rome, 24 October 2023

I am extremely grateful for this opportunity to be part of this session linking the food security agenda and the Rio conventions.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate this Committee for its important achievements over the years to promote food security.

Distinguished delegates,

Nothing is more important for the future of biodiversity than the way we manage food systems.

Food systems are the main contributors to many drivers of biodiversity loss: land-use change, overfishing and the overexploitation of wild animals and plants, pollution from pesticides and the overuse of fertilizers. They also contribute to climate change and the spread of invasive species.

As we have heard many times and just now from the President of the Economic and Social Council, currently, our food systems are failing to provide nutritious food for all and good jobs for many.

The call for transformation of our food systems is getting ever louder.

If the problems lie in food systems, so do the solutions.

Distinguished delegates,

In December last year, at the fifteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, the world community came together and adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

This is an ambitious agreement to take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss and, by 2030, to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and the planet.

There are enormous opportunities to leverage this agreement to contribute to food system transformation.

Our food systems are 100 per cent dependent on biodiversity: the diversity of crops, livestock and wild food species, pollinators, pest control organisms and soil biodiversity. Biodiversity underpins the functioning of ecosystems, including agroecosystems.

The Framework includes targets to protect genetic diversity and to use biodiversity more effectively in agriculture, to improve pollination, pest control and soil fertility, and in aquaculture, fisheries and forestry, to increase the resilience and productivity of those systems.

It includes targets to halve, by 2030, excess nutrients lost to the environment and the risks to biodiversity from pesticides, as well as to restore 30 per cent of degraded ecosystems.

It also calls for a reduction in harmful subsidies by \$500 million a year and for halving food waste and reducing overconsumption.

Achieving these and the other targets of the Framework will not be easy.

Recognizing that its ambitious goals and targets cannot be achieved by the environment sector acting alone, the Framework calls for a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach.

It is founded on a human-rights based approach, including the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, it respects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including over their lands and territories, and it promotes gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

The application of rights-based approaches developed under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and this Committee, such as the right to food and the voluntary guidelines on land tenure, is very important in this context, as is the work of this Committee to champion the recognition of the important role of farmers, including small holders and family farmers, and to promote agroecological and other innovative approaches.

As countries now develop their own national targets, update their national biodiversity strategies and action plans, put in place policies and undertake activities, we need the full engagement of ministries of agriculture, forestry and fisheries as part of the whole-of-government approach.

We also need the full engagement of all those involved in the food system, farmers, foresters and fisherfolk, traders, consumers and all of us as citizens, as part of a whole-of-society approach.

There are many opportunities. We heard just now from Fatema Aref al-Mulla of the United Arab Emirates regarding the opportunities to link national biodiversity strategies and action plans and nationally determined contributions in countries.

Distinguished delegates,

At this halfway point in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we know that we are seriously off-track in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. We also know that the continued loss and degradation of biodiversity further jeopardizes the achievement of the Goals, including Goal 2, on ending hunger and promoting sustainable agriculture.

In this Decade of Action, we need to advance our collective efforts. Let us celebrate and nurture our diversity, the diversity of our food and food systems and the diversity of the natural world.

We must seize the opportunities to work together, with a common sense of purpose, for a more just, equitable, sustainable world.

I thank you for your attention.
